

## Language Learning Strategies of the Successful Students at Non-English Study Program

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims at finding out and describing language learning strategies of the successful students at non-English study programs. The subjects of this research were 3 students of Islamic education. All of them were chosen by using purposive sampling technique. In this research, the researcher used mix-method (the exploratory design). The qualitative data was analyzed by using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (2014) while the quantitative data was analyzed by using the questionnaire of Oxford (1990). The results of the research demonstrate that the characteristics of the successful students of non-English study programs consist of academic leadership, extra-curricular activities, professional practice, academic grades, time dedicated, clear objectives, and family structure. Lastly, the researcher claimed that teacher's teaching method could be considered as one of the characteristics of the successful students.

Meanwhile, among six types of learning strategies consisted of memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies, the researcher found out that the most dominant language learning strategies applied by the successful students is metacognitive strategies. Next, the researcher found out the relation between language learning strategies and academic success that described that the more students apply metacognitive strategies in their learning process, the more successful they will be.

*Keywords:* language learning strategies, successful students.

### INTRODUCTION

Learners are considered as active participants in their learning process, especially when they learn about a foreign language. It means that they also learn how to communicate by using that language. Since the number of language learning materials processed by students are high in classroom, students use different language learning strategies in doing tasks and processing the new input that they receive. Language learning strategies are good signals of how students accomplish assignment or difficulties found during language learning process. In

other words, they are effective for language teachers to identify students' way in understanding and using the language in the classroom.

Language learning strategies have received much attention in the past few decades. They are goal-oriented actions or steps such as planning, evaluating, and analysing that learners take, with some degree of consciousness, to enhance their L2 learning and they can affect students' learning of a second or foreign language O'Malley & Chamot, (1990). In addition, they can stimulate students to learn English successfully and efficiently, as well as allowing them to develop their own ways of learning English. So, students can become more confident and autonomous in learning English.

It is common for people to know that there are a lot of students in English study program having good achievement in learning English. One of the reasons is because they have strong will and passion in learning English that is why they took English as their major. Besides, most of the subjects taught for them are about English materials. Hence, they have many chances to improve their English skills. However, students of non-English study programs can prove their achievement in English as well. Therefore, the researcher was interested in conducting the research in order to identify the characteristics of the successful students and the types of language learning strategies applied by the successful students of non-English study programs of Tarbiyah faculty at IAIN Palopo.

Based on the problem, this research examined three research questions:

- a. What are the characteristics of the successful students of non-English study programs at IAIN Palopo?
- b. What is language learning strategy used most frequently by the successful students of non-English study programs at IAIN Palopo?
- c. Is there any relation between language learning strategies and academic success of the students of non-English study programs at IAIN Palopo?

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Definition of Students' Success**

According to Cuseo (2007), students success can be evidenced when they (1) feel recognized as individuals, welcomed, and are treated well as students, (2) believe in their efforts in studying, (3) get the connection between what they are learning at school and their future goals, (4) are active in learning process whether it is in the inside or outside of the classroom, (5) can create good socialization with other students and other members of school, (6) can relate what they have known with what they are currently learning, (7) are aware with their learning style and learning habits.

### **Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies**

Oxford's classification of language learning strategies is divided into two parts. First is direct strategies consisting of (1) memory strategies comprised of applying images and sounds, reviewing well, creating mental linkages and

employing action, (2) cognitive strategies comprised of receiving and sending messages, practicing, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output, (3) compensation strategies comprised of guessing intelligently, and overcoming limitation in speaking and writing,. Second is indirect strategies consisting of (1) metacognitive strategies comprised of arranging and planning learning, centering learning, and evaluating learning, (2) affective strategies comprised of encouraging yourself, lowering anxiety, and taking emotional temperature, (3) social strategies comprised of asking questions, empathizing with others, and cooperating with others.

### **Factors Affecting Language Learning Strategies**

#### **1. Level of language proficiency**

Most of the studies showed that the students with the highest level of language competence use a greater number of strategies more frequently and in a more effective way than those with a lower level Al-Buainain (2010); Alhaisoni (2012).

#### **2. Motivation**

Some studies have given evidence of that significant relationship between the use of learning strategies and motivation, showing that more motivated learners use more and a wider range of LLSs, Benson & Gao (2008);

#### **3. Learning style**

The studies explained that extrovert students have shown strong fondness for social strategies, while introvert students preferred metacognitive strategies to be used in their learning process, Ehrman and Oxford (1989).

#### **4. Gender**

Studies have described the importance of gender differences between males and female language learners in which females have shown to use more strategies than males, Zare (2010).

### **The Essential of Language Learning Strategies in Language Learning and Teaching**

Lessard-Clouston (1997) stated that language learning strategies give positive impacts for the progress of students' good ability. Additionally, teachers teaching students in using language learning strategies can assist them to become better language learners.

### **METHOD**

This study used exploratory design of mixed-method procedure. The first question was designed qualitatively, and the second question was designed quantitatively. To get the qualitative data, the researcher used semi-structured interview formed by Del Ángel Castillo, M. C. (2009). Furthermore, to get the quantitative data, the researcher applied strategy inventory language learning (SILL) invented by Oxford (1990). The researcher adopted the interactive model of Miles & Huberman (2014) to analyze the qualitative data, and descriptive statistics of SPSS 20 to analyze the quantitative data. The total population of this

current research was students of the second year of Islamic education at IAIN Palopo. The researcher used the purposive sampling to select the successful students. After doing the pre-observation, apparently most of those study programs set English courses for students only in the first semester. Only students of Islamic education and Raudatul Athfal study English until the third semester. Hence, the researcher only took two study programs which were Islamic education and Raudatul Athfal. The criterion of successful students is having English scores which is in range between 95-100 (A+). Based on the data, there were three students categorized in that range score. All of those students were from study program of Islamic Education.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Characteristics of the Successful Students at non-English Study Programs**

*The first* is academic leadership. Based on the data from interview, the finding clearly revealed that the successful students have got the experience as the leader in the association at campus or school. It means that the students can be responsible as a leader. Besides responsibility, there are also other impacts that the students can get if they have the experience as a leader. They are always be on time to do all of their activities including attending lecturing on time, having good attitude to others such as lecturers and friends, knowing how to communicate well with other people, etc. It was also underlined by Cress, C. M., Astin, H. S., (2001) leadership skills are positively related to a student's ability to impact other students and help to develop these skills in others. Therefore, it can be concluded that the effects of leadership is greatly benefit not only for the development of knowledge and skills of students, but also for others who can imitate them as good models.

*The second* is the extra-curricular activity. The researcher found that the successful students have participated in extra-curricular activities such as model, Leadership Basic Training, and HMPS. Students choosing extra-curricular activities are usually based on activities that they have interested on it. Some of the reasons are because they want to add skill that is lack, enhance their knowledge, having better input about how to socialize with others, etc. Those are related to Massoni (2011) stated that extra-curricular has many good impacts on education. Those are affecting habit, better results, and study accomplishment to become successful adults, and a social aspect.

*The third* is professional practice. The successful students have their plans for their future. Two of them want to be the lecturers, and another wants to be the teacher at school. According to Moeller, A. J., Theiler, J. M., & Wu, C. (2012) goal setting is the process of starting clear and distinct objectives for learning. Having picture of future profession is essential for students especially in earlier time, because they will have sufficient preparations to manifest them in obtaining their goals. The crucial factor is having strong determination because it will encourage students in the process of having good achievement. Next is being discipline especially in arranging the time to improve the abilities. If students are

getting used to have the effective time management, all of their activities will be on the right track and they will not waste the time to do useless things. Therefore, having goal in the future career is not just about having plan but the most important thing is the students' ways to reach their goals.

*The fourth* is academic grades. The successful students explained that they always get good academic grades since they were in the first semester, especially the grades of English. According to Janusheva, Pejchinovska, Kostadinovska (2016), the higher grade (usually the highest) causes a pleasant feeling due to accomplishment and in the case of obtaining it. Hence, academic grades can also be a factor to motivate students in studying because they usually want to maintain the grade that they already have.

*The fifth* is time dedicated. The researcher found that the students always finish their assignment on time. They try as much as possible to not postpone it if they have free time. So they can do another activity that is already put on their schedule on the right time. This is in accordance with Miqdadi, AlMomani, Masharqa., et al (2014) stated that students in universities must learn how to manage their time effectively. Therefore, students should think about how to set good time management and organize their days in order to get balance between school or university life and home. Some ways to create good management time are firstly listing important things that students have to do. Then, arranging life schedule started from school until going back to home. However, there is one thing that should not be ignored by the students is providing the time to refresh their mind such as taking vacation with family or friends. It is also important to avoid student's pressure during their study.

*The sixth* is clear objectives. The researcher found that the students plan to continue their study in order to be more professional as the lecturers. It means that Students realize that it is not enough for them if they just only rely on the knowledge gained in their current education level. Moreover, they all want to become educators. Of course, it does not only require knowledge in teaching but also in terms of mastering of science. In the application of those sciences, it must be adapted to the development of the current era. As educators, teachers need to know exactly what the students need and how to effectively provide the best education for them. Therefore, by continuing education, they can gain more knowledge for the quality of learning for students later. Rugraff (2004) found on his study stated that levels of education affected students achievement.

*The seventh* is the family structure. The researcher found that the students get the highest motivation in studying because they want to get better future. Therefore, their parents always support them to study hard in order to get good achievement in their study. Family plays an important role for the process of growth and development of children. The way parents use in educating will determine how good the child's self-concept is. The better the child's self-concept, the easier it is to achieve success in life. Parents should be good examples for their children. In addition, they are also able to be friends for their children so that

children do not have to feel hesitate if they want to express something to their parents.

Besides those findings stated above, the researcher found teacher's teaching method as the characteristic of the successful students which is not mentioned by Del Ángel Castillo, M. C. (2009). Based on the interview, one of the participant said that when the lecturer required the students to actively speak English during the learning process, it will motivate the students to try in speaking English. Conversely, if the lecturer just put the rule only for a moment, the students will not care to speak English in the learning process.

A : Do you always speak English when you are studying in the class?]

B : I was used to speak English because the lecturer required us to speak English. Although I still had less vocabularies. Bu now, I am not active anymore in speaking English because the lecturer does not notice about that.

Therefore, the researcher claimed 'teacher's teaching method' as the novelty of this research. It can be used as the one factor to know the characteristics of the successful students.

## **2. The Most Dominant Language Learning Strategies Used by the Successful Students**

The subject of this research used metacognitive strategy most dominantly, followed by compensation, cognitive, memory, social, and affective strategies as the least used. This result is in line with Liu (2004) exploring a variety of learning strategeis used by the technological English major students in China. He found that the participants of his study preferred using metacognitive strategy the most. This is also in line with Dhanapala's (2007) findings of language learning strategies learners in Japan and Sri Langka with metacognitive strategy ranked the highest.

## **3. The relationship between language learning strategies and academic success**

Based on the finding above, it stated the successful students of non-English study programs at IAIN Palopo employed metacognitive strategies dominantly that other strategies. All the items of metacognitive strategies in SILL designed by Oxford (1990) are in line with the characteristics of the successful students at non-English study programs. Those are stated on the extract 22-27. They are consistent with Wafa (2003), Young and Fry (2012) and Yang (2009) reviewed the use of metacognitive strategies on the achievement of English language in the context of English as a Foreign Language. They agreed that there is a positive relationship between the use of metacognitive strategies and achievement in English. Wafa (2003) finds that students with high achievement in English use more metacognitive strategies than students of low achievement in that language. Therefore, to improve the academic performance of students, the

teacher should raise metacognitive strategies of the students. It is more practical to have a learning process that does not only focus on learning skills, but also contains requirements for the development of metacognitive skills.

## **CONCLUSION**

The researcher found that the characteristics of the successful students of non-english study programs at IAIN Palopo covered theory of Del Ángel Castillo, M.C.(2009) consisted of academic leadership, extra-curricular activities, professional practice, academic grades, time dedicated, clear objectives, and family structure. Moreover, there is a new characteristic found in this research. It is teacher's teaching method. Another finding is the most dominant language learning strategies used by the successful students of non-English study program at IAIN Palopo is metacognitive strategies. The last is there is the relationship between language learning strategies and academic success because the more students apply metacognitive strategies in their learning process, the better they are in learning process.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Related to the metacognitive strategies as the most dominant language learning strategies used by the successful students, it is essential for teachers to prepare their teaching materials in order to raise students' metacognitive strategies. Firstly, teacher should plan teaching materials based on the skill that students need because it will boost students' attraction. After teaching, teacher should evaluate the teaching and learning process and try to find effective ways in order that students can understand materials correctly.

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